

FITNESS

Exercise and Older Adults

The notion that exercise is good for you is something everyone just always seems to have known. Staying physically active and exercising regularly can help prevent or delay some diseases and disabilities. In some cases, it can improve health for older people, who already have diseases and disabilities, if it's done on a long-term and regular basis.

Four Types of Exercises to Focus on

1. Endurance Exercises

Endurance exercises are activities that increase your breathing and heart rate. They improve the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system. Having more endurance not only helps keep you healthier, it can improve your stamina for the tasks you need to do to live and do things on your own – climbing stairs and grocery shopping for example. Endurance exercises also may delay or prevent many diseases associated with aging, such as diabetes, colon cancer, heart disease and stroke.

2. Strength Exercises

Strength exercises build your muscle but they do more than just make you stronger. They may improve your independence by giving you more strength to do things on your own. Even very small increases in muscle can make a big difference in ability, especially for frail people. Strength exercises also increase your metabolism, helping to keep your weight and blood sugar in check. That is important because obesity and diabetes are major health problems for older adults. Studies suggest that strength exercises also may help prevent osteoporosis.

3. Balance Exercises

Balance exercises help prevent a common problem in older adults: falls. In older people, falling is a major cause of broken hips and other injuries that often lead to disability and loss of independence. Some balance exercises build up your leg muscles, which in turn improves your balance.

4. Flexibility Exercise

Flexibility exercises are stretching exercises. They are thought to help keep your body limber by stretching your muscles and the tissues that hold your body's structures in place. Physical therapists and other health professionals recommend certain stretching exercises to help their patients recover from injuries and to prevent injuries from happening in the first place.

